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PLAN FOR A COOPERATIVE ACQUISITION POLICY AMONG THE LIBRARIES OF THE WESTERN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

by

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Introduction

The following pages show the plan that is being used by libraries of the Western Theological Library Association to develop a cooperative acquisition policy. Although there are certain logical difficulties that will become apparent due to the desire to keep the principles as simple as possible, it is hoped that the work will still have practical results.

That there is a great need for neighboring libraries to cooperate in the acquisition of books in the same fields would seem to be evident at such a time as this, when the publishing of theological literature is rapidly outstripping the most expanding individual budgets. Since this plan represents only a beginning venture in this field and therefore is in need of further refinement and improvement, it is hoped that librarians will study the work and make such constructive criticism as seems warranted, so that other interested groups may profit therefrom.

Background

With the growth of the union catalog of the Charles Holbrook Library of the Pacific School of Religion, which now includes the collections of cards from ten libraries, it soon became apparent that there was a certain amount of unnecessary duplication of titles in fields where perhaps one copy of a title would be sufficient for the area. The possibility of working out a cooperative acquisition policy for our libraries was discussed with the presidents and/or librarians of the seminaries in this area and the idea was welcomed. In 1954 at the spring meeting of the Western Theological Library Association the Charles Holbrook Library was charged with the task of setting up a pilot model for our seminaries to follow, and after the individual libraries had made their surveys and formed their policies, a master list of policies and an index thereto was to be compiled for all seminaries of the association.

This idea is not new in library science. The John Crerar Library of Chicago celebrated in recent years the fiftieth anniversary of such a cooperative policy with the Newberry Library and the Chicago Public Library. By means of such a policy it has become possible for the John Crerar and the Newberry Libraries to become the outstanding libraries in the world in their respective fields of concentration.

Perspective

Such a program for our area does not advocate that any library purchase books in fields with which it is not concerned. It does not mean that any seminary will not buy significant books, perhaps, in every field of religion, for each library will want to have all the books necessary in all fields pertinent to the needs of students studying for their B. D. degrees. Toward this need much duplication of books among seminaries is of course necessary. What it does mean, however, is as follows:

1. Each library will work out a policy of book selection so that it will be concentrating its efforts as far as possible, to build up certain subject fields most germane to its interests.
2. Each will cooperate with the other libraries by making known its interests and specializations.
3. Each library will work towards dividing responsibility with neighboring libraries in the acquisition of books that are in the same field of concentration, in order to cut down duplication of research items as far as possible.
4. If such a cooperative policy can be worked out for our libraries, instead of spreading our book funds thinly over the various subjects of religion, we shall be able to build far more significant collections to support advanced research in specialized areas of interest.

Principles used in the plan

The following pages represent the principles by which the plan was guided, including a sample page from the survey of the subject fields of the Charles Holbrook Library with notations as to 1) the extent to which each field will be covered in the acquisition policy, 2) a graded evaluation of each field based on the extent to which that field has been developed to meet the desired goal. All subject fields for which there is a positive acquisition policy for research purposes have been divided and listed according to the divisions given in the Union Seminary system of classification and represented by the class letters and numbers at the extreme left of the page. The numbers and letters in parentheses represent respectively the extent of acquisition for each field and the evaluation of each field as it meets at present the established aims for that subject. These letters show the library's and faculty's estimated evaluation of each subject in terms of the familiar grades of A for excellent to D for poor.

Four numbers have been used to express the policy for the degree of concentration in any field:

1. The supplementary research collection. Number 1 refers to a collection that is out of scope as far as ever having enough material to support advanced research in that particular subject, but it is developed to provide supplementary material for another field. For example, in our library Latin and Greek classical authors are important as background material for the thought of the world in Biblical times and therefore they form a supplementary research collection.

2. A research collection. Number 2 is for a collection generally adequate for the needs of the graduate student of the subject and includes a major portion of materials required for independent research. It will contain the principal monographs and periodicals in the field. Although some foreign language material may be included in this collection, for example Latin and Greek texts and some works in German and French, the accent is placed upon works in the English language, whether original or translated.

3. A comprehensive collection. This is a research collection having all of the material in the previous category, plus a wider selection of books and periodicals having value for current research and including the most important works for historical research in the subject. It aims to cover the best of thought in the subject whether in any of the principal languages of Europe or elsewhere, as long as they are germane to the scope of the subject.

4. An exhaustive collection. This is a collection which endeavors to include everything written on the subject in all editions and translations and in all languages of all time, but not necessarily in variant issues of the same edition. Exhaustive collections will be undertaken, naturally, only in limited areas.

Grading the collection

Grading the collections is necessary, because the numbers from one to four are used only to define the acquisition policy for any respective field, but the grade will point out the relative strength or weakness of that field in respect to the aims for the collection, and will thus make easier the allocation of funds for its development. The graded subject lists of all our libraries will finally be combined into an alphabetical index of subject fields, and this should act as a quick reference aid when in doubt as to whether to purchase an expensive item or not, and it will also help a candidate for a higher degree not only to know the expected strength of the library in his chosen subject or subjects, but also will point out the strength of neighboring libraries from which he may borrow materials. It must be stressed, however, that because of varying standards, reflecting often different purposes, the strength of libraries in the same fields cannot be closely compared, nor should it be necessary for our purposes.

Category Number One

Since the number one or Supplementary research collection does not aim to contain the depth of material necessary to support graduate research, its grade will depend on how well it covers the whole field in outline form, e.g., a 1A supplementary collection of Latin or Greek Classics would contain in translation or in the original language one or more significant or representative works of all or nearly all of the classic Greek or Latin authors.

Category Number Two

For books in the number two or Research collection category:

1. The books in any given subject field of this category should be

graded by an estimate of the percentage of the important books the library has in respect to the total number in the field in the English language, unless the nature of the subject precludes the English language.

2. It will be obvious that the number of books will vary greatly from subject to subject, depending on varying circumstances, e.g., a much larger number of significant books will be needed to satisfy even a 2C collection in some areas of Church History than in the new field opened up by the recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

3. From the standpoint of translating the grade for this division into terms of value for graduate study, a 2C collection in our library might be regarded as the minimum size and quality to support an S.T.M. degree, and that usually in a very limited area.*

Category Number Three

Subject collections in this category that form a Comprehensive collection, as defined:

1. will cover the significant books in other languages besides English, if the nature of the subject so demands, and
2. will represent the principal books for historical research as well as books for current research.
3. Depending upon the subject and the circumstances the 2A collection may be regarded as approximately equal in value to a 3C collection, but differs in the character of the acquisition policy. In the Charles Holbrook Library these grades should in general be a minimum for work on the level of the doctorate confined only to this narrow field.

Making the survey

The survey should be the product of the thinking of the faculty and the librarian.

1. Since this is to be a survey of only those fields in which the library is consciously endeavoring to build or to maintain specialist collections, naturally only those subjects that meet these conditions need be mentioned or graded.
2. The faculty or the library committee should inform the librarian of the subjects and the extent of the acquisition policy for each.

*That there should be some minimum grade for a collection having a minimum amount of material to support an advanced degree within the confines of the narrow field seems obvious, although the dividing lines so named are only a starting point, and constructive criticism is everywhere invited.

3. The librarian should translate these subjects into the class numbers and headings of the Union Theological Seminary classification system.
4. The librarian and the faculty should grade each subject in accordance with their knowledge of the respective fields.
 - a. The shelf-list and the subject catalog must be examined to give accurate information as to the extent and quality of the literature.
5. Mimeographed sheets of the survey should be given to all faculty members for criticism of the acquisition policies and the grades given to the collections.
6. The corrected sheets should be sent to the Charles Holbrook Library.
7. This library will inform the libraries that are concentrating their efforts in the same fields, in the hope that these fields may be subdivided among these libraries, in order to cut down duplication and to increase the strength in the area.
8. The final sheets will be compiled into the union survey of all libraries, and an alphabetic index to all collections in our libraries will be made.
9. Copies of the final work will be sent to all libraries contributing to the plan.

Sample Page from the Survey of the Library of Pacific School of Religion
Acquisition Policy and the Evaluation of the Subject Fields
at the Present Time

F New Testament

- FE-FG (3B) New Testament canon and criticism
- FH-FK79 (3B) New Testament commentaries
- FS20-27 (3B) Criticism and historical study of sources of the life of Christ
- FS54-90 (3B) Life of Christ (biographical treatises)
- FT (3B) New Testament history and biography
- FX-99 (3B) New Testament theology

G Christian Literature

- GD-GH9 (3D) Early Christian literature
- GK-85 (3D) Apocryphal writings relating to New Testament events and characters
- GM3 (2D) Post-Apostolic Greek Fathers to 5th century including GN5
- GN3 (2C) Augustinus, Aurelius, St.
- GQ-GR1 (1D) Medieval Latin Christian writers, ca. 700-1500
- GT2-89 (1C) Luther (will depend on Pacific Lutheran)
- GT91 (2D) Melancthon
- GU-3.9 (2C) Calvin
- GW25 (2C) Schleiermacher
- GW26 (2C) Ritschl
- GW28 (3A) Karl Barth (works of Barth, exhaustively, German or English)
- (3A) H. Emil Brunner (works of Brunner, exhaustively, German or English)
- GX (2A) Kierkegaard

H Biography, Antiquities, History

- HE56 (3B) Coins, numismatics, seals, Jewish and Biblical, etc.
- HH30 (2A) Philosophy of history
- HH45 (1A) History of civilization and culture
- HK-5 (1C) Ancient history
- HK9-HM8 (3A) Ancient semitic nations, archaeology and antiquities
- HP23-38 (3B) Hebrew civilization and history to the time of Christ
- HS (2B) Ancient Egypt
- HT-2 (2C) Asia Minor, ancient cities
- HW43-75 (1C) Greece, ancient history and antiquities

I Church History and Christian Antiquities

- IA20-67 (2B) Early Christian antiquities
- IF7 (3C) Modern church historians
- IJ-45 (3D) Early church history to the Middle Ages
- IM3-8 (1C) Medieval church history
- IP-60 (2D) Medieval dissent and early reformatory movements (very poor)
- IQ-80 (1D) Renaissance age and humanism
- IR-32 (3D) Reformation period, 15th-16th century
- IS-IT (3D) Post-Reformation church history, 16th century to date

